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RHMFIS/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC  
RHMFIS/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 000853

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP AND ISN/CPI  
DHS FOR PLCY

E.O. 12958: 08/26/2019

TAGS: [ETRD](#) [ENRG](#) [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [SA](#) [AE](#)

SUBJECT: ABU DHABI CUSTOMS FOCUSED ON SECURITY, RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR RICHARD G. OLSON FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D.

REF: ABU DHABI 611

**¶1. (C) SUMMARY:** During an August 11 meeting on other topics, Abu Dhabi Customs Director General Saeed Al Muhairi told DHS Attach and EconOff that Abu Dhabi's relationship with Saudi Arabia is strained due to illicit smuggling across the borders. Al Muhairi said his primary concern is national security. To that end, AD Customs is investing in significant equipment upgrades, including a new radioactive detection portal. END SUMMARY.

BORDER ISSUES

**¶2. (C)** Al Muhairi said that Abu Dhabi's relations with Saudi Arabia were strained due to illicit smuggling across the border. (Note: Reftel discusses recent border problems. End Note.) Al Muhairi said that he believed other Emirates' customs authorities, e.g., Dubai Customs (Note: in the UAE, customs services are organized at the Emirate, not Federal, level. End Note.), focused primarily on revenues and were not sufficient examining incoming goods before shipping them to Saudi Arabia through Abu Dhabi's border crossing at Al Ghuwaiifat. Al Muhairi said that Abu Dhabi is planning to require -- and fund -- enhanced security measures for container traffic between the emirates in an effort to disrupt smuggling, e.g., container seals with GPS tracking capability. Al Muhairi noted that he supports the unification of UAE customs authorities, perhaps under the Federal Customs Authority (a policy body), which would improve security and cut down on illicit activities.

SECURITY UPGRADES

**¶3. (C)** Al Muhairi said he has made multiple trips to the United States in recent months to purchase new security equipment. In addition to two new mobile scanners, Abu Dhabi's Mina Zayed Port also has installed a radiation detection portal (Canberra SP3000). (Note: Other AD Customs officials told DHS that the portal was specifically installed in preparation for the January 2010 Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) Leading Edge exercise. End Note.) Al Muhairi said he has also purchased upgraded equipment from American Science and Engineering (AS&E). Noting plans to develop the new multibillion dollar Khalifa Port near Taweebah, Al Muhairi said his investments in upgraded equipment will continue for a number of years.

**¶4. (C)** DHS/ICE Attaché discussed the wide range of USG classroom and operational training available to UAE customs authorities. Al Muhairi expressed interest in pursuing these offers, specifically bulk cash training and operations.

**¶5. (C) COMMENT:** While there is much talk that Abu Dhabi may seek to consolidate customs enforcement at the federal level, it is likely to be an ongoing battle. Customs tariffs, particularly in Dubai, are a

significant source of revenue for individual emirates. Increased federal scrutiny of imported and transiting goods could have a direct impact on these revenues. It is also likely that any effort at unification would reveal subtle and divisive comparisons of efficiency and divergences of policy objectives among the Emirates.  
END COMMENT.  
OLSON